Introduction to Public Administration

Sample Syllabus

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Course Description

This is an introductory course designed to provide a venue for master students to become exposed to the present state of research, theory building, and practice in public administration in general, and in public management in particular. The course will begin with a discussion of the nature of public administration and move to some subfields in public administration, such as administrative organizations, administrative reforms, decision making, policy implementation, and so on. We will also examine the people side of government organizations as well as management and leadership roles within organizations. Recent management innovations in government will be discussed.

The course is intended to move beyond a conceptual framework of public administration and help students develop the knowledge, insights and skills necessary to manage and lead public organizations. Toward this goal, case studies will be used as throughout the semester. In short, this class is both theoretical and practical. The course will include lectures, discussion, case studies, simulations, role plays, and other experiential learning.

Course Materials

Required Readings:


In addition, we will be reading a number of case studies. The Kennedy School Cases are available for purchase online at www.ksgcase.harvard.edu. Be sure to mark your status as "Academic" to receive a substantial discount on the purchase price. The names and numbers of the cases are included in the weekly readings below.

All of the other readings for the course will be available on Blackboard.

Recommended Books:


**Course Requirements**

**Class Participation (20%)**

Active class participation means engagement, informed by knowledge of the readings and other materials, in class sessions and other aspects of the course. Your comprehension and insights about cases and assigned readings are vivid in class discussion, and I will note and appreciate quality comments.

- I would expect that you will attend every class and that you are prepared. I will “cold call.” Arriving late/leaving early cannot enhance and may well reduce your final course grade.

- Each student is required to prepare at least 2 or 3 discussion questions related to the assigned readings and bring the questions to the class. Please email the questions to me by 5:00 pm on the day before class. However, in order to allow time to explore a smaller number of issues in greater depth, not every question will be discussed in class.

- Students should also prepare for the case discussions (if it is assigned) by identifying, and being prepared to participate in the class discussion, on: (1) the issues raised, (2) the relevant theory and practice (from readings, experience, etc.), and (3) your recommended actions and rationale.

- I will be happy to discuss the course, your progress, or any other issues of interest to you on an individual basis. Please see me in class or call to set up an appointment.

**Case Studies (40%)**

Students are expected to submit two (out of three options) short memos throughout the semester. Details on case assignments can be found in the Appendix. Memos are due in hard copy at the beginning of class. The instructor will have all written assignments returned to you, graded and with comments, one week after they have been handed in.
Requirements for case assignments: All written assignments should be clearly written and well organized. They are to be typed, no more than 4 pages each, double spaced, and 12 - Times New Roman format. All written assignments must be on time. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Synthetic Critical Essay Review (40%)

A 15-page essay on a topic selected from Kettl book. You may gear the paper to your area of interest, but must explore the topic in public administration field. In order to get my feedback on the paper as you work on it, we will adhere to the following schedule:

a) Week 4—topic selection is forwarded to me, with a preliminary listing of literature examined.

b) Week 8—submit a summary of what you are finding in your literature review on each topic. This will be an outline. I do not review drafts of papers.

c) Week 14—final paper due after the presentation

Your paper will incorporate the following:

a) What are the major issues involved in the study of the topic you have selected and what do we know about them?

b) How do we know it? That is, what is the state of methodological choice, development, sophistication, and marshalling of evidence? Where do we have consensus on findings? Where do we not? Where are the major gaps that you see in the study of the topic (substantively, methodologically, epistemologically).

c) What do you see as a priority(ies) for future research in this area for theory development and testing, and why?

Each student should also prepare for a powerpoint presentation during the last class meeting. The powerpoint file should be structured for a ten-minute briefing that addresses and explains the key points of the analysis presented in the paper. Each powerpoint presentation will also be made available in digital form to all other class participants. The presentation will be counted as 10% of your grade.
# Course Overview

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**Part I: Intellectual Development of American Public Administration**

| 2    | The Nature of Public Administration                                  |                                  |                             |
| 3    | The Development of American Public Administration                    | HKS case 1843.0                  |                             |

**Part II. Public Administration as Managing Bureaucracy**

| 4    | Administrative Organization                                          | Hand-out                         | Topic selection due         |
| 5    | Decision Making, Policy Process, & Implementation                    |                                  | Assignment #1 due           |
| 6    | Human Resource Management                                            | HKS case 1181.0                  |                             |

**Part III. Public Administration as Governance**

| 7    | Administrative Reform                                                | HKS case 1269.0                  |                             |
|      | HKS case 1270.0                                                      |                                  |                             |
| 8    | Tools of Government                                                   |                                  | Summary of literature due   |
| 9    | Contracting                                                           | HKS case 1326.0                  | Assignment #2 due           |
| 10   | Collaboration and Networks                                            |                                  |                             |
| 11   | Performance Management                                                | HKS case 1647.0                  |                             |
| 12   | Leadership and Leading Change                                         | HKS case 101.0                   | Assignment #3 due           |
|      | HKS case 102.0                                                       |                                  |                             |
| 13   | Presentation                                                          |                                  |                             |
| 14   | Presentation/Wrap-up                                                  |                                  | Final paper due             |
COURSE SCHEDULE

Class 1. Introduction

*General introductions, overview of course and discussion of syllabus and grading. Please bring a copy of the syllabus to class.

Readings:

Kettl, Ch. 3, p.59-71.

Part I: Intellectual Development of American Public Administration

Class 2. The Nature of Public Administration

Readings:

Kettl, Ch. 1 – 2.


Class 3. The Development of American Public Administration

Readings:

Goodnow, F. J. (1900). Politics and administration. (excerpt)

Taylor, F. W. (1912). Scientific management. (excerpt)

Gulick, L. (1937). Notes on the theory of organization. (excerpt)
Barnard, C. I. (1938). Informal organizations and their relation to formal organizations. (excerpt)


Appleby, P. (1945). Government is different. (excerpt)

Simon, H. A. (1946). The proverbs of administration. (excerpt)

Waldo, D. (1948). The administrative state. (excerpt)

Case Discussion:

Hurricane Katrina (A): Preparing for "The Big One" in New Orleans (HKS 1843.0)

Part II. Public Administration as Managing Bureaucracy

Class 4. Administrative Organization

Readings:

Kettl, Ch.4 and 6

Merton, R. K. (1957). Bureaucratic structure and personality (excerpt)


Downs, A. (1967). The life cycle of bureaus (excerpt)


Case Discussion:

Preventing Child Abuse: The Challenge for the Department of Social Services (Hand-out by instructor)

Class 5. Decision Making, Policy Process, & Implementation
* Please bring a policy problem in your field of interest to the class meeting. Think in advance how the policy analytical models in the reading could help understand the policy process. We will discuss in class your cases.

Readings:

Kettl, Ch. 10.


Class 6. People in Government Organizations

Readings:

Kettl, Chapters 8 and 9, p.273-286.


Case Discussion:

Disability Issues in the Workplace (HKS case 1181.0)
Part III. Public Administration as Governance

Class 7. Administrative Reform

Readings:

Kettl, Ch.7


The National Performance Review. (1993). From red tape to results: Creating a government that works better and costs less (excerpt)

Case Discussion:

Organizing Competition in Indianapolis (HKS case 1269.0 and 1270.0)

Class 8. Tools of Government

* We will divide the students into several groups, each responsible for one tool of government (e.g., contract, grant, tax, …). You then will be the expert on that tool and “teach” the class. Powerpoint presentation might be helpful. We will discuss the detailed arrangement and requirement one week before this class.

Readings:

Kettl. Ch 3


Class 9. Contracting

Readings:

Kettl, Ch 12, p.420-426.


Case Discussion:

Partners in Child Protection Svcs: DSS and La Alianza Hispana (A) (HKS case 1326.0)

Class 10. Collaboration and Networks

Readings:


Class 11. Performance Management

Readings:


**Case Discussion:**

Mayor Anthony Williams and Performance Management in Washington, DC (HKS case 1647.0)

**Class 12. Leadership and Leading Changes**

**Readings:**

Kettl, Ch 9, p.286-304.


**Case Discussion:**
Jiahuan Lu, Sample Syllabus, Public Administration

Jerome Miller and Department of Youth Services (A) and (B) (HKS case 101.0 & 102.0)

Class 13. Student Presentation

Class 14. Student Presentation / Wrap-up: What have we learned?

Readings:


What have we not covered this semester that you are most interested in?
Appendix: Assignments

These assignments are designed to provide you an opportunity to think about how you would handle specific public administration issues. There is no right or wrong answer for the assignments. Grades will be determined on how well you support your arguments.

Assignment #1:

Reading: Hurricane Katrina (A): Preparing for "The Big One" in New Orleans (HKS 1843.0)

This case tells the story of the lead-up to the storm, detailing the plans that officials would draw on to prepare for the hurricane’s onslaught, the steps that were taken to evacuate and shelter hundreds of thousands of residents in metropolitan New Orleans, and the communications among different agencies and levels of government as the storm drew near; it shows officials concerned about the effects of the hurricane, but confident that their preparations were commensurate with the challenges that Katrina would pose. The case asks readers to consider why local, state, and federal governments all proved unready to respond effectively to a catastrophic event which had been long predicted.

Since the attacks of September 11th, 2001 the government has shifted the focus of many agencies towards terrorism. The reorganization of many agencies into the newly formed Department of Homeland Security has changed the operational structure with which many have been accustomed. The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security has asked you to form a work group to explain what some of the problems with DHS’s structure that were prevented it from helping Louisiana and the surrounding states prepare for hurricane Katrina.

Answer the following questions:

1. What actions were taken by local, state and federal agencies to prepare for Katrina? Was DHS involved in these? Were they prevented from being involved?

2. How had FEMA’s role and resources changed since becoming part of DHS?

3. How could FEMA have been better able to assist in preparations?

4. What organizational changes in DHS and FEMA would allow for better preparation in the future?

Assignment #2:

Reading: Columbia’s Final Mission (HBS Case 9-304-090)

You may find these two reading helpful while writing your answers:


Answer the following questions:

1. Assess the performance of Rodney Rocha and Linda Ham. Did each do all what he or she should have done? Why was it so hard to hold anyone accountable?

2. How organizational issues kept important technical concerns from being heard? How organizations should deal with "ambiguous threats" - weak signals of potential crisis?

3. What role did NASA’s culture play in the Columbia disaster?

4. Put yourself in the shoes of the managers in the case, consider the following questions: What prior assumptions and beliefs shaped the way that you thought and behaved during the Columbia mission? What pressures affected your behavior? Where did these pressures originate? In what ways did the culture impact your actions? If you were in that person’s shoes during the Columbia mission, would you have behaved differently? Why or why not?

**Assignment #3:**


Answer the following questions:

1. Whether or not you believe that Milestones is on balance an improvement over the previous system for paying vendors of employment services for the severely disabled, assess its greatest strengths relative to the *status quo ante*.

2. Whether or not you believe that Milestones is on balance an improvement over the previous system, assess its greatest weaknesses and risks.

3. The vendors providing employment-related services for the severely disabled in Oklahoma, both prior to and after the 1996 reforms, were private, but not-for-profit. Was this an essential constraint under the earlier input-based contracting system? What would have been the advantages and disadvantages of for-profit private suppliers under the pre-1996 fee-for-service system? Is the case for restricting contracts to non-profits (instead of contracting with both non-profit and for-profit vendors) stronger, or weaker, with the new Milestones system? Why?
4. What are the characteristics of a social service function that make it most suitable to outcomes-based contracting? What characteristics make outcomes-based contracting inappropriate? Under what general circumstances is inputs-based private contracting (rather than outcomes-based contracting, on the one hand, or direct governmental service delivery, on the other) likely to be the most suitable way to deliver public services?